

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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O R 241620Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4166
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BERLIN 5278

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN PFOR GE CZ PINS
SUBJ: DETENTION OF NBC CORRESPONDENT

REF: A) PRAGUE 0346; B) WARD/POLANSKY TELCON FEB 24

SUMMARY: NBC CORRESPONDENT COLLITT HAS PROVIDED A DETAILED
ACCOUNT OF HIS DETENTION IN EAST GERMANY BY CZECH BORDER CONTROLS
AND OF THE SUBSEQUENT CONFISCATION OF HIS NOTES AND TAPES FOLLOWING
A TWO-WEEK STAY IN PRAGUE REPORTING ON CHARTER 77 DEVELOPMENTS.
ALTHOUGH HAVING TAKEN PLACE ON GDR SOIL, NO EAST GERMAN
ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO INTERFERE WITH THE ACTIONS OF CZECH OFFICIALS.
THE EMBASSY PROPOSES CALLING THE MFA'S ATTENTION TO THIS
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INFRINGEMENT ON AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST'S RIGHT TO WORK AND
TRAVEL, EVEN WHILE TRANSITTING THE GDR. COLLITT ALSO GAVE
EXAMPLE OF EAST GERMAN ATTEMPT GIVE GUIDANCE TO CZECHS ON
DIVERTING TRUE AIMS CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. - END SUMMARY.

1. IN AFTERMATH EVENTS DESCRIBED REFTTEL AND POSSIBLE
INVOLVEMENT GDR AUTHORITIES IN DRESDEN, PAO VISITED NBC

CORRESPONDENT LESLIE COLLITT IN WEST BERLIN FOR FULLER ACCOUNT HIS FEBRUARY 3 EXPERIENCE AT GOC-GDR BORDER. REPORT FOLLOWS.

2. COLLITT HAD INITIAL TWO-HOUR DELAY ON JANUARY 21 UPON FIRST ENTERING CZECHOSLAVKIA AT RAILROAD BORDER CROSSING POINT OF DECIN. SENIOR CZECH OFFIER HAD TORN OUT CLIPPINGS ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA FROM ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL HERALD-TRIBUNE AND FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG BORNE AND MARKED BY COLLITT.

3. ON NIGHT OF COLLITT DEPARTURE FEBRUARY 3 AROUND 1800 HOURS AT DECIN, THREE CZECH PASSPORT AND CUSTOMS CONTROLLERS BOARDED TRAIN, QUESTIONED COLLITT, FEMALE MEMBER, SEACHED BAGGAGE AND OVERCOAT, CONFISCATED 90 PAGE NOTEBOOK AND TWO CASSETTES, ONE IN COAT, OTHER STILL IN TAPE MACHINE, AS WELL AS GERMAN-LANGUAGE CLIPPINGS FROM CZECH PRESS AND RELEASES BY CZECH NEWS AGENCY. NOTEBOOK IN ENGLISH CONTAINED INTERVIEWS WITH GOC OFFICIALS AND CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS WHICH CONTROLLERS RECOGNIZED AND VOCIFEROUSLY IDENTIFIED AS SIGNERS OF CHARTER 77.

4. ARRIVING DRESDEN, COLLITT TAKEN OFF TRAIN AND CONFRONTED AGAIN BY SAME SENIOR OFFICER PARA 2, TO WHOM COLLITT SHOWED PRESS ACCREDITATION CARD EXPLAINING IT AUTHORIZED HIM WORK AS JOURNALIST IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. CURRENT ACTIONS, HE PROTESTED, VIOLATED BOTH GOC PRESS ACCREDITATION AND HELSINKI DECLARATION. SENIOR OFFICER TOOK ALL DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING PASSPORT, AND SAID HE WOULD TELEPHONE PRAGUE FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

5. AFTER HALF-HOUR, SENIOR OFFICER RETURNED WITH ALLEGED INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRAGUE TO CONFISCATE NOTEBOOK AND TAPES. WHEN
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ASKED ON WHAT GROUNDS, OFFICER REPLIED - "YOU WERE A GUEST OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC BUT YOU WROTE BAD THINGS ABOUT US." COLLITT POINTED OUT THAT IMPOUNDED MATERIALS INCLUDED STATEMENTS AND INTERVIEWS WITH GOC MFA SENIOR PRESS SPOKESMAN MILAN KADNAR, CHIEF OF PRESS OFFICE FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND SPOKESMAN FOR FOREIGN TRADE MINISTRY , TO NO AVAIL.

6. INQUIRING ON TRANSPORTATION TO BERLIN, COLLITT TOLD NEXT TRAIN 0300 HOURS, SIX AND HALF HOURS LATER. HE SPENT THAT TIME UNDISTURBED IN MITROPA CAFE DRESDEN STATION RE-WRITING NOTES FROM MEMORY. ("IF WOULD HAVE BEEN KAFKAESQUE HAD THEY CONFISCATED THOSE AS WELL.") HE THEN CAUGHT 0300 TRAIN.

7. THROUGHOUT DRESDEN EXPERIENCE, ONE GDR OFFICIAL STOOD BY SILENTLY, NEVER INTERFERED, COLLITT'S PASSPORT HAVING ROUTINELY BEEN STAMPED ON ENTERING GDR. ON ARRIVING AT BORDER GDR-WEST BERLIN, HE WAS ASKED BY GDR BORDER OFFICIAL REASON FOR DELAY HIS ARRIVAL AND ACCEPTED WITHOUT

COMMENT COLLITT'S BRIEF RECITAL EVENTS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BERLIN 5278

COMMENT: COLLITT PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT LOSS OF NOTES-TAPES
THOUGH ANNOYED BY CZECH TREATMENT. AS FORMER HEAD WEST
BERLIN FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION, WITH CONSIDERABLE SOVIET
AND EAST EUROPEAN MEMBERSHIP, HE MUCH AWARE PRESS
DIFFICULTIES COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. ON GDR ASPECT, HOWEVER,
COLLITT SAID HIS COVERAGE EAST GERMAN DEVELOPMENTS HAD NEVER
CAUSED HIM DIFFICULTIES, OUTSIDE NORMAL - FOR GDR - REQUIREMENTS
HIRING CAR AND INTERPRETER. CONSEQUENTLY, DESPITE FACT THAT
CONFISCATION TOOK PLACE DRESDEN, HE PLACE FULL BLAME ON CZECH
AUTHORITIES. PAO DID NOT MENTION TO COLLITT CZECH MFA EMBASSY
SESSION OR POSSIBILITY EMBASSY BERLIN DEMARCHE TO GDR MFA,
NOR DID COLLITT EVEN SUGGEST LATTER. NEVERTHELESS,
EMBASSY CONSIDERS CITING OF COLLITT MATTER ADVISABLE INASMCUH
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AD DENOUEMENT OF OFFENDING ACTIONS TOOK PLACE GDR TERRITORY.
PAO REQUESTING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESS CHIEF MFA DISCUSS
OTHER MATTERS AND COULD RAISE COLLITT CASE IN CONTEXT PROTECTION
RIGHTS U.S. JOURNALISTS, WITH EXPRESSION SURPRISE AT GDR
INDIFFERENCE ENCROACHMENT ITS VOEREIGNTY. AWAIT DEPARTMENT
ADVICE.

9. ASKED ABOUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS OR EVEN REFERENCES TO GDR
DISSIDENTS BY CZECH CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP, COLLITT SAID LATTER
SPOKE SLIGHTINGLY OF EAST GERMAN WRITERS' ACTIONS IN WAKE OF
BIERMANN EXPULSION, PARTLY OUT OF CZECH DISLIKE OF GERMANS,
MOSTLY BECAUSE THEY CONSIDERED SOLIDARITY OF CHARTER 77 SIGNERS
MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATION OF COURAGE THAN ANYTHING DONE
IN GDR. COLLITT GAVE EXAMPLE OF EAST GERMAN ATTEMPT MUDDY
WATERS AND OFFICIAL CZECH RESISTANCE SUCH MOVE. AT JANUARY 24
MFA PRESS CONFERENCE KADNAR WAS ASKED BY "NEUES DEUTSCHLAND"
PRAGUE CORRESPONDENT WHETHER CHARTER 77 SIGNERS HAD NOT
ALREADY BEEN LINKED WITH WESTERN INTELLIGENCE AND SUBVERSIVE
AGENTS. KADNAR APPARENTLY REJECTED THIS CRUDE INVITATION
RECALL 1968 EVENTS WITH SIDESTEPPING REPLY THAT MATTER UNDER
INVESTIGATION. ACCORDING TO COLLITT, CZECH MEDIA FOLLOWING DAY
OMITTED ND QUESTION FROM ALL ACCOUNT OF CONFERENCE.POLANSKY

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